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THE USES OF SYMBOLISM IN GREEK ART

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF BRYN MAWR COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

1922

FA628.138

FA623.01

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Published January 1923

Composed and Printed By
The University of Chicago Press
Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Greek art has been discussed in general and in detail by archaeologists; but whether the investigation has been from the categorical or aesthetic point of view, no one element of that art has been so generally taken for granted and so little analyzed as symbolism. Everyone accepts as unquestioned the assumption that personification occurs in Greek art and that gods were known by their attributes (e.g., Zeus by his thunderbolt), but up to the present time little has been done in classifying the various kinds of symbolism or in indicating what use was made of symbols by the Greek artist and artisan.

The purpose of this dissertation is fourfold. First, to note the various genera of symbols found in Greek art from the sixth century before Christ to the Graeco-Roman age;[1] second, to ascertain to what uses these symbols were put; third, to discover the relation of the medium to the types of symbols used; fourth, to suggest possible relationships between the Greek treatment of symbolism and that of other nations.

As a preliminary step, it will be necessary to understand clearly what is meant by a symbol. "Symbol" is used, not in the restricted sense of the numismatists,[2] but in a broader sense. The use of a symbol implies that the object depicted does not carry merely its own material signification, but represents some idea broader and more comprehensive than itself.[3] For example, the rose of Rhodian

[1] I have set the fall of Corinth in 146 B.C. as the practical limit of Greek work, but I shall not hesitate to include works which may belong to a slightly later date, if they seem to corroborate any given point.

[2] Cf. Macdonald, *Coin Types*, p. 3, "The mark whose presence constitutes a coin is spoken of by numismatists as a 'type,' while the word 'symbol' is used to denote any secondary device which may appear side by side with the main type without being linked to it by any organic connection."

[3] Goblet D'Alviella, *The Migration of Symbols*, Preface, p. 2, affirms that a "Symbol only requires that it shall have certain features in common with the object represented, so that by its presence alone it may evoke the conception of the latter."

coins is not a mere botanical specimen, but is the intellectual concept of a city which, because its name was similar in sound to the name of the flower, adopted that particular flower as the symbol to indicate the city. In another instance, the thunderbolt of Zeus on coins of Elis is not a phenomenon of nature realistically depicted, but is, rather, a means of representing the dread power and awe-inspiring authority of a deity who ruled the sky and whose wrath could take vengeance with the swift thunderbolt.

An exhaustive catalogue of all the symbols found in Greek art is not possible within the limits of this dissertation. Since the attributes of the gods alone would fill several volumes if every known instance were cited, only suggestive examples have been listed. No attempt has been made to discuss the psychological basis for any symbols, the *libido* theory of Freud and Jung has not been treated here.

Many of the genera of symbols, such as personification, have already been popularly recognized, but to others purely arbitrary terms have been applied in this dissertation. In any such classification groups may overlap and one symbol can perhaps be interpreted in several ways. Furthermore, a single work of art, such as a vase painting, may contain a very large variety of symbols from the different classes.

Finally, it seems advisable to call attention to the fact that symbols appear more frequently on vases, coins, and gems than in the major arts. The reason for this phenomenon will be discussed in chapter iv.

CHAPTER II

VARIOUS CLASSES OF SYMBOLS

A preliminary distinction must be drawn between symbolism as an artistic device and symbolism as an accidental part of the pictorial content. For instance, a vase painting representing some ritual scene may include the representation of various ritual objects of a symbolic nature; but the symbolism here is not artistic symbolism, because it has no artistic function to perform, it is merely a casual part of the pictorial content. So stated, this distinction should be clear and obvious. There will, however, be cases where the distinction may prove somewhat difficult to apply. In a vase painting of Athena an owl may occur. In so far as the owl is there in order to identify Athena for the spectator, it is clearly an artistic symbol; but in so far as the owl is due merely to some ritualistic association, its occurrence will be none of our concern. In particular, we shall not consider the implications of symbolic objects that have to do with the study of Greek magic, or ritual, or folk-lore, except in so far as these objects have some artistic function to perform. Our test will always be, "Does the represented object stand for any object or idea, other than itself, which is necessary to the artist's intention?" If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, we shall conclude that the symbolism is in the art and not merely in the idea represented.

The symbols found in Greek art may be divided into three groups according to the kinds of ideas which are involved. The various classes of symbols under each of these main groups exhibit the different methods employed to express these ideas.

The first group[1] comprises symbols which stand for literal and concrete objects, such as the sea, the land, a city or state, a river, a deity. The symbols belonging to this group are classed as

[1] The lack of corresponsion in the form of various terms is due to the fact that, wherever terms have already been adopted, I have used them, to avoid the pedantry of coining new names. For instance, canting and personification are well known, therefore I have kept both terms, although one is an adjective and the other a noun.

attributive, representative, canting, commercial, and agonistic. Personification, owing to its twofold nature, forms the link between the first group and the next.

The second group comprises symbols which deal with abstract ideas or with emotions—fertility, power, purification, fear, pain, and the like. These ideas and emotions are generally expressed by substituting some object which has sufficient features in common with the original to awaken by association the conception of that larger idea or emotion. For instance, the idea of fertility was so closely interwoven in the primitive mind with the phallus that the mere appearance of the phallus served to recall immediately the more abstract conception. The symbols belonging to this group are classed under the headings of analogy, physical for spiritual, cause for effect and effect for cause, and include the second form of personification mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

The third group includes symbols which give expression to some idea of magic. The symbols in this group are classed as apotropaic, necrological, and astronomical.

Group I
1. Attributive

Attributive symbols consist of various accessory objects worn or held by given figures, or displayed in conjunction with them, for the purpose of distinguishing or differentiating some being, human or divine. This genus of symbols has long been recognized in Greek art, even though no specific name may have been applied to it. By aegis, armor, snake, or owl, Athena can be easily identified, whether on the Varvakeion statuette (B.B., Pls. 39, 40), or on the cylix by Euphronios representing Theseus at the court of Amphitrite (F.R., I, Pl. 5). By thunderbolt, scepter, and eagle, Zeus is recognized on the Pergamene frieze (Baumeister, II, 1252 f., Pl. XXXVII), or in the bronze statuettes from Olympia (*Olymp. Pub.*, IV, Pl. VIII, 44, and VII, 45). The Aphrodite Genetrix of the Louvre is known by the pomegranate or apple (B.B., Pl. 473); on the Meidian group of vases the same goddess is identified by a poppy or an accompanying Eros. The accoutrements of war prove the identification of the god Ares in the famous Ludovisi statue (*ibid.*, Pl. 388). Hermes' petasos, kerykeion, and sandals are too well known to require any references to illustrations. Poseidon's ordinary attribute is the trident, but sometimes a fish

is added or even a horse: on the famous Kertch vase showing the contest of Athena and Poseidon (*C.R., Atlas* [1872], Pl. I = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 37) all of his attributes appear. Apollo is usually known by the bow, lyre, or tripod, according as the artist is representing the "Far-Darter," the god of music, or the god of prophecy. But on the Vatican hydria, commonly attributed to Brygos, all three attributes are used: Apollo is seated on a winged tripod which travels over the sea, he has a quiver on his back, and he carries a lyre (*Mon. d. Inst.*, I, Pl. XLVI = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 79).[1] Nor do gods alone possess such attributes, but demigods, heroes, and mortals are likewise distinguished by some peculiar accessory. Among demigods we need only cite the well-known figure of Heracles with his lion skin and club, e.g., on the Geryon cup of Euphronios (F.R., I, Pl. 22). The Palladion which Diomedes stole from Troy furnishes a clue to the identity of that hero on a vase from Ruvo (*Mon. d. Inst.*, II, Pl. XXXV = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 102). A housewife is known on Greek grave-reliefs by the basket of wool at her side (stele of Mynno, Gardner, *Sculp. Tombs*, p. 157, Fig. 62); the Discobolos of Myron (B.B., Pl. 256), the Apoxyomenos of Lysippos (*ibid.*, Pl. 281), and the Oil-Pourer in Munich (*ibid.*, Pl. 132) are examples of athletes known by the attributes of discus, strigil, or oil flask.

This type of symbolism developed early in the repertoire of primitive Greek art, because there were so few anthropomorphic types available, in fact only two—the nude male and the draped female. Apparently, drapery was among the earliest means of classification by attribute. With sex thus indicated by drapery or the lack of it, the artist was confronted by the problem of creating from these two types a series of stock characters identified by varying attributes. In the representation of a myth or a scene from daily life these distinctive attributes would preclude the possibility of mistake or uncertainty in the identification of the participants in the scene.

On the one hand, Greek art dealt with definite and concrete figures of gods and men and not, like much modern art, with vague

[1] For more complete lists of the attributes of these and other gods, compare Roscher's *Lexikon* under the name of each deity.

commerce of that city, and the ear of corn of Metapontum (*ibid.*, p. 75). The latter symbol has been claimed as an attribute of Demeter or Apollo; yet, granting this, there seems no adequate reason why it could not simultaneously refer to trade in that article; it is an open question which would be the earlier significance—religious or commercial. The wine cup and grapes of Naxos (*ibid.*, p. 488) may likewise belong here, though referring at the same time to the worship of Dionysus who was especially revered in that city. Probably the Bacchic types on the coins of Mende (*ibid.*, p. 211) carry a similar suggestion of the famous wine of that city. Certainly the tunny fish of Cyzicus (*ibid.*, pp. 522 f.) must be an example of the commercial type, and the wine jar for Chios (*ibid.*, pp. 599 f.) probably refers to the far-famed Chian wine. Concerning the mussel shell of Cumae, Head notes (*ibid.*, p. 37), "The mussel shell is a remarkable example of the παράσημον of a city, borrowed from among the natural products of the locality. The shallow salt lakes of Avernus and Lucrinus are particularly adapted to the cultivation of shellfish."[1]

5. Agonistic

Other cities chose to advertise themselves by putting upon their coins the suggestion of various agonistic victories which had fallen to their lot. This type of symbol is commonly called agonistic and it is employed for the glorification, not only of cities, but of individual rulers. Coins of Rhegium have a mule car driven by a bearded charioteer (*ibid.*, p. 108) which on the authority of Aristotle (*ap.* J. Pollux, V, 75) connects the coin with the Olympic victory won by Anaxilas of Rhegium. The victorious quadriga on the coins of Agrigentum (Head, *H.N.*, pp. 121 f.) is certainly indicative of victory in the games and may have been adopted in honor of Exainetos of Agrigentum who, having won a victory in the Olympic games in 412 B.C., was brought into his native city escorted by 300 *bigae* drawn by white horses (Diod. xiii. 82). The chariot and Nike on Syracusan coins (Head, *H.N.*, pp. 171 f.) must refer to the agonistic victories of Syracuse, whether or not it can be proved that they definitely commemorate any particular victory of Gelon or Hieron.

[1] Even at the present day the oysters from this region are prized throughout Italy.

This agonistic type is, for the most part, confined to coins and is particularly frequent on those of Sicily. I suggest, however, that the athletic subjects on pan-Athenaic amphorae may be a further example of this type of symbol, and the fighting cocks on the arm of the throne of the priest of Dionysos in the great theater at Athens must also be classed here, since the cocks are symbolic of the contests over which the priest's god was supposed to preside.

6. Personification *a*) Concrete objects

Two forms of personification occur in Greek art. In the first an actual and concrete object, such as a river or spring, is given animal or human form since its own nature cannot be represented literally on vase or coin or statue in the round. This type belongs to the first main group of symbols. The second type of personification is composed of pure abstractions, such as Victory, Madness, or Love, which must be reduced to some tangible form in order to receive artistic representation. This type belongs to the second main group of symbols.

As an example of the first type, the river Gelas is represented as a man-headed bull on the coins of Gela (*ibid.*, p. 140, Fig. 73), in connection with which it is interesting to note the literary evidence for a statue of the river Gelas as a bull (*Schol. Pind. Pyth.*, I, 185). On the coins of Catana (Head, *H.N.*, p. 130, Fig. 69) the embodiment of the river as a man-headed bull is made more obvious by the accessory fish and water-bird. But all personifications of nature are not rendered by animal forms. There are human figures such as the nymph Arethusa on coins of Syracuse (Hill, *Coins of Sicily*, Nos. 1–3, frontispiece) representing the fountain of that name, or the nude male figure of the river Alpheus in the pediment of the Zeus temple at Olympia (*Olympia Pub.*, III, Pls. XVIII–XXI), or the Ilissus and Cephisus on the pediments of the Parthenon.

Group II 6. Personification *b*) Pure abstractions

The symbols in the second main group are more subjective and sophisticated, since they endeavor to represent, not a fact nor an object, but either an idea in itself complicated and abstract, or an emotion. That type of personification which deals with pure abstractions belongs to this main group. Of these pure abstractions possibly the most familiar are the Nike by Paeonios (B.B., Pls. 444, 445) and the Victory of Samothrace (*ibid.*, Pl. 85). Sleep and Death tending the body of Sarpedon (Klein, *Euphronios*,

p. 272) are familiar to all lovers of Greek vases. The innumerable representations of Eros in all the fields of art testify to the popularity of this personification. On a vase in Munich appears the figure of Oistros or Madness (F.R., II, Pl. 90) riding in the snake-chariot of Medea, while the sorceress slays her hapless son. The kindred figure of Mania is seen at a window in the background on a late Italian vase by Assteas which shows the madness of Heracles (*Mon. d. Inst.*, VIII, Pl. X = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 168).[1] On the group of vases associated with the name of Meidias there are many figures such as Peitho, Paidia, Eudaimonia, Eunomia, Himeros, Pothos, Eris, Eros and others (Nicole, *Meidias et le style fleuri dans la céramique attique*). Dike and Adikia appear on a vase in Vienna attributed to Pamphaios (*Memorie*, II, Pl. 4 = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 353). It is difficult to determine how far these personifications are due to the artists and to the exigencies of their means of pictorial expression, and how far they are merely the artist's inheritance from poetry and from the anthropomorphising tendency for which the Greek mind is so notorious. Clearly we cannot ascribe to the artists such personifications as Sleep and Death, Victory, Iris, Eros, Charon, and other similar poetically well-authenticated figures (though, of course, the artists are largely responsible for their eventual look and appearance). But there is much justification for holding that the dramatists and the artists between them are responsible for giving a concrete and physical embodiment to many literary metaphors in which such abstractions as Madness, Longing, Delight, and so on, were spoken of as persons. It should be noted in this connection that the linguistic accident of *gender* for all nouns is always a powerful incentive toward personification just because all masculine nouns have to be spoken of as "he" and all feminine as "she."

c) Allegory

After the climax of Greek art, in the period of decadence, a further development of personification arose, which might be termed allegory. This might be cited as a separate genus of symbols were not the line of demarcation between the two too hazy and uncertain to permit of making a distinct group. The distinction between

[1] It seems possible that such figures as these may be borrowed from the drama; for instance, Thanatos appears as an actor on the stage in the *Alcestis* of Euripides.

allegory and symbolism is, after all, largely arbitrary. I should like to suggest the following definition as practical and useful: a symbol is always an accessory needed to complete our understanding of the main object which is concretely represented; while an allegory is a grouping of symbols such that the true meaning is not represented at all, but must be inferred from the collocation of symbols. In allegory, therefore, the symbolism is no longer concerned with a simple figure, but manifests itself in a multiplicity of accessory ideas likewise expressed by symbols. In the frieze of the great altar of Zeus at Pergamon we see elaboration of detail which would be foreign to art of the fifth century, in the Tyche of Antioch (B.B., Pl. 154) and Father Nile (*ibid.*, Pl. 196) we find a more complex symbolism than is in accord with the simpler ideals of the best period. The central theme of the Tyche is the personification of the genius of the city, but accessories combine to give a sophisticated picture of the location of the city: thus the turreted crown suggests the battlements of the wall, a boy beneath the feet of Tyche suggests the river Orontes, even the turn of the body hints that "the city was set upon the slope of a hill, bending forward upon itself in the turn of a valley" (Gardner, *Handbook*, p. 486). Similarly, personification is the dominant symbolism in the statue of Father Nile; but the artist was not content with a simple representation of the subject, but, to make unmistakable the aquatic character, added waves on the base. The sphinx, crocodiles, and reeds make certain the localization in Egypt, while the cornucopia suggests the fertility resulting from the yearly overflow; the sixteen little figures, certainly symbolic, have been interpreted as the number of cubits of the maximum inundation of the Nile.

7. Analogy

Another and quite distinct group of symbols developed out of this same difficulty of giving artistic form to abstract ideas. Here the solution of the problem was the representation, not of the abstract idea personified, but of some concrete object closely allied in significance; for instance, the idea of fertility cannot be literally expressed, but the phallic sign commonly served to suggest it. Accordingly, symbols by analogy are those which substitute a simple and concrete object for a kindred abstract or complicated idea. Thus a pig could indicate purification since that animal was

sacrificed in cathartic ceremonials.[1] But this would be an instance of artistic symbolism only in so far as the artist desired to express this idea of purification and was unable to picture it fully. The pig would accordingly become a sort of attributive symbol, identifying the character of the scene in the same way as a trident might identify a person as Poseidon. So, on a vase illustrative of the myth of Orestes (*Mon. d. Inst.*, IV, Pl. XLVIII = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 132) purification from blood-guilt is indicated by the pig which Apollo holds over the head of the matricide.[2] But in addition to identifying the scene, such a symbol may have been intended to suggest the whole *Stimmung* so that its artistic value would be much more than a mere badge or label. So, the pomegranate or apple may be a mere attributive symbol of Persephone, or Aphrodite, or Hera, and yet at the same time be a symbol of fertility calling up a much more abstract notion by analogy. Whether connected with Hera, Aphrodite, or Persephone, the pomegranate or apple seems to be indicative of fertility (cf. Hehn, *Kulturpflanzen*, pp. 237 f.). On a vase in Arezzo (F.R., II, Pl. 67) the marriage of Pelops and Hippodameia is symbolized in the mating of the birds in the tree.

It seems possible that the Greeks also made use of color with a symbolic connotation. We know from literary references that colors did have some significance; for example, Apollo changed from white to black the unlucky raven which bore to him the message of the faithlessness of Koronis; the ship of Theseus which returned from the expedition against the Minotaur was to carry white or black sails according to the success or failure of the enterprise. It has long been recognized that the use of color on early Greek sculpture is not realistic but decorative, and it may have had a symbolic significance, the key of which is lost to us. Color symbolism has been used in the art of other peoples, such as the Mayas, North American Indians, and Chinese (Haddon, *Evolution in Art*, p. 124), as well as in Christian art. In Mesopotamia the seven stages of a ziggurat were each painted a different color,

[1] Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 282 f., *τοιαῦτον γὰρ ὂν πρὸς ἑστίᾳ θεοῦ, Φοίβου καθαρμοῖς ἡλάθη χοιροκτόνοις.*

[2] For further discussion of the connection of pig with purification, compare Harrison, *Prolegomena*, pp. 152 f.

"the colors being emblematic of the seven planets" (Handcock, *Mesopotamian Archaeology*, p. 273).

8. Physical terms for spiritual ideas

An apparently subtle, but really very simple, type of symbolism consists in the assumption of physical terms for ideas which are actually in the realm of spiritual affairs. Primitive man in his uncertainty as to future life invested the dead with supernatural power and depicted this superiority by physical magnitude. As evidence of this I may cite grave-reliefs where the heroized dead seated on thrones receive the homage of diminutive survivors, as on the Spartan Relief (B.B., Pl. 227) and the Harpy Monument (*ibid.*, Pls. 146, 147). On the same principle, deities were represented as of more than mortal stature, to correspond to their superhuman power and strength. Behind this lies the concept that colossal size is to human size as divine power is to mortal power. Probably the same idea determines relative size of deities and mortals on friezes like that of the Parthenon (*Parth. Pub.*, Pls. 33 and 34) and the sculptured architrave at Assos (B.B., Pls. 411 and 412) where the gods, being seated, are made relatively larger, while the law of isocephalism is still observed. Possibly this same idea was a factor in determining the proportions of the gods in the pediments of the Aphaea temple at Aegina (*ibid.*, Pls. 23–25, 26–28), of the Zeus temple at Olympia (*Olymp. Pub.*, III, Pls. XVIII–XXI), and of the Parthenon (*Parth. Pub.*, Pls. 1 f. and text, Figs. 9 and 27). The relation of gods to mortals is very artistically adjusted to the mechanical restrictions of the shape of the field by placing the gods in the middle of the pediment where colossal size and central position combine to make the gods the focus of attention.

The fact that ancient literature mentions the colossal size of so many statues of gods, whether cult-images or not, gives further proof that physical mass and size were used to indicate spiritual force and power. Only a few of these many colossal statues need be cited: a colossal wooden image by Endoios at Erythrae (Paus. vii. 5, 9); the colossal Heracles by Onatas of Aegina (*ibid.*, v. 25, 12); three colossal figures by Myron (Strabo xiv. 637); the Athena Parthenos of Phidias (Plin. *N.H.* xxxvi. 18); Zeus at Elis (Strabo viii. 353); Hera at Argos (Paus. ii. 17, 4); the Colossus at

Rhodes (Plin. N.H. xxxiv. 41); Hera by Praxiteles (Paus. ix. 2, 7); Valour and Hellas by Euphranor (Plin. *N.H.* xxxiv. 77); Zeus of Tarentum by Lysippos (*ibid.*, xxxiv. 40); and the bronze Heracles by Lysippos (Strabo vi. 278).

Two groups of symbols, in direct antithesis each to the other, are ingenious and yet in keeping with the trend of primitive thought. These two groups in which the symbols may indicate sensations and emotions are not so frequent as the previously mentioned types. The first of these groups comprises symbols which represent the cause instead of the effect; in the second the symbol represents the effect instead of the cause.

9. Cause for effect

Under the first group come representations of an object which could be the cause of a sensation or emotion: to suggest fear, a bear is represented on terra-cotta lamps in Athens (*Ath. Mitth.*, XXVII [1902], p. 258); on the interior of the Sosias cylix (F.R., III, Pl. 123), the arrow at the left is a symbol of the pain from the wound that is being bound up by the faithful friend. One would expect this to be very common, but I have been unable to find many instances of this type of symbol.

10. Effect for cause

Under the second group we might put the Nereid figures (B.B., Pls. 211–13) whose drapery connotes by suggestion the blowing of the wind or the driving of the sea—ideas which could not be represented sculpturally. The strong S-shaped sweep of the drapery of Iris on the Parthenon pediment (*Parth. Pub.*, Pl. 3) suggests that swiftness of movement which alone could create such curves. The idea of speed and celerity of motion is proverbially well expressed by the drapery of the Nike of Samothrace (B.B., Pl. 85) so that this statue must be included in the group of symbols which represent the effect instead of the cause. By a similar use of the reaction to suggest the stimulus, gestures may indicate various emotions; for example, on the front of the Boston Counterpart to the Ludovisi Throne the gestures of one figure indicate joy, while the gestures of the companion figure denote sorrow (*Handbook of Museum of Fine Arts*, p. 80).

Group III

11. Apotropaic

The third and last main group of symbols gives expression to ideas of magic. The class called apotropaic will include the prophylactic eye which, whether on Ionic "Eye-cylices" or on shields,

serves as a magic sign to ward off evil spells. In all probability the Gorgoneion, especially on armor, served a similar purpose, and it is possible that both the prophylactic eye and the Gorgoneion may have had their origin in primitive magic masks used in ritual ceremonies to ward off evil spirits.[1]

The snakes which appear so frequently on early Greek stelae belong to a second class of magical symbols which we may term necrological. It seems probable that the presence of the snake suggests superhuman power on the part of the dead, whether that power consists merely of immortality or of the actual ability to work weal or woe to the survivors (cf. Harrison, *Themis*, p. 271). 12. Necrological

Among magical symbols we must also include astronomical symbols. Among the Greeks, as among other peoples of the ancient world, there was a belief that some connection existed between the heavenly bodies and mankind. This connection was supposed to be particularly close in the case of the planets and the signs of the zodiac. Euripides, in a fragment, mentions Hippo, the daughter of Chiron, foretelling the future from the stars. The astronomical symbols most frequently occur on Greek coins and when so used are supposed to indicate critical periods or festival seasons. On coins of Sinope a dolphin and an eagle appear, and here the dolphin has been interpreted as the constellation adjacent to Aquila (Thompson, *Glossary of Greek Birds*, p. 4); on coins of Mende a crow and an ass are found, and Thompson connects this with "the constellation Corvus which sets shortly after Cancer with which the ass is associated" (Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 91); the coins of Agrigentum with eagle and hare on the obverse and eagle and serpent as accessories on the reverse are supposed to have similar reference to the respective constellations (Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 8). On a cameo in St. Petersburg we find Taurus and the Pleiades grouped together (Harrison, *Themis*, pp. 205–6, Fig. 53). It is not within the scope of this thesis to do more than call attention to the existence of this group of magical symbols in Greek art, since for the most part they are not artistic symbols but mere pictures of objects in a symbolic context (cf. p. 3). 13. Astronomical

[1] Cf. Roscher, *Lexikon*, under "Phobos" for the theory of an early personification of fear, and its relation to the Gorgoneion.

CHAPTER III

THE USES OF SYMBOLISM

In the preceding chapter we have taken cognizance of the various classes of symbols; we must now carry the investigation further in order to discover the uses to which these symbols were put and the purpose which they served.[1]

I. Identification

One of the most frequent and important functions of symbolism is identification. This is to be found employed in connection with (1) gods, (2) heroes, (3) various occupations of daily life, and (4) indications of time and place of action.

1. Of deities

The symbols which serve to identify deities are the most easily recognized and the most frequent in occurrence. As we stated above (p. 5), there were practically only two anthropomorphic types available for the primitive Greek artist—the nude male and the draped female. The artist was therefore compelled to resort to symbolism in order to differentiate his divine figures. That attributes do actually serve to identify the gods may be readily proved by the consideration of one or two instances. The bronze figurines of Zeus found at Olympia (*Olymp. Pub.*, IV, Pl. VIII, 44, and VII, 45) are merely variants on the ordinary nude male type, common throughout Greek art of the sixth and fifth centuries. That these statuettes represent the Father of Gods and Men is indicated, not by supernatural beauty of form or visage, nor by supernal dignity, but by the presence of the thunderbolt which once and for all settles the question of identity. At a much more advanced period of art, the Pergamene frieze (B.B., Pl. 483) shows Zeus identified by the same symbol. True, art by this period had established an artistic conception for the representation of Zeus (Gardner, *Principles*, p. 92), yet religious conservatism often caused the retention of symbols when artistic procedure had outgrown the

[1] The material of this chapter will be largely a repetition or re-citation of the evidence used in the previous chapter, but in a different context. The investigation was concerned in chap. ii with type or *kind*, in the present chapter with *function*.

need of them. Other deities are distinguished in the same manner. On the Kertch vase with the contest of Athena and Poseidon (*C.R., Atlas* [1872], Pl. I = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 37) the two deities are recognizable by their attributes: Athena by shield, spear, aegis, snake, and olive tree;[1] Poseidon by trident, fish, and horse. On various cyclices showing the judgment of Paris (Gardner, *Principles*, chap. XVIII, pp. 296 f.), the three contesting goddesses are distinguished by their attributes, and without such characteristic features it would be impossible to tell Aphrodite from Hera or Athena.

Sometimes a deity might be identified by attributes characteristic of one function and sometimes by those of another. Thus, Artemis may be depicted in any one of three aspects: as πότνια θηρῶν she is accompanied by a stag or other wild animal; as a chthonian goddess she carries a torch; and at Ephesus as a goddess of fertility she is shown with many breasts. Similarly, the varied activities of Zeus are indicated by varying attributes: on the coins of Elis the sky-god is identified by thunderbolt and eagle; but on the coins of Epirus the wreath of oak leaves indicates his mantic nature at Dodona; while the addition of the eagle on one side and Cerberus on the other, on a statuette in the British Museum (Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, I, p. 105), marks the figure as Zeus Hades. The three attributes of Apollo are familiar to all—the bow and arrows, the lyre, and the tripod, but each serves to indicate a quite distinct function of the god. The bow and arrow mark him as the "Far-Darter," the lyre indicates the patron of music, and the tripod is the distinguishing mark of the god of prophecy. These functional attributes would in themselves make an interesting study for determining the origin and growth of the Greek pantheon.[2]

2. Of demigods and heroes

The demigods and heroes of Grecian mythology furnish further evidence of the use of symbols for identification, since various

[1] Another use of symbolism is also present in the olive tree, namely, as a method of narration; cf. the discussion of the metope of Selinus, p. 34.

[2] The origin of the divine attributes involves ethnological and psychological questions, so that probably the explanation of some of them will never be complete: to mention only one instance, the double axe of Zeus Labrandeus is a mystery still unsolved.

attributes and accessory objects serve to distinguish these lesser orders of beings. The best known in this group is Heracles. On the Antaeus crater of Euphronios (F.R., II, Pls. 92–93 = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 242) is the representation of two nude figures in a violent struggle. So far as the two combatants are concerned, it would be impossible to identify either; but on one side the lion skin and club, laid aside for the moment, prove conclusively that the scene depicted is some contest in the life of Heracles. Since there was no specific characteristic peculiar to Antaeus, the artist makes his identity known by inscription. There are almost countless instances of this use of attributes in connection with other Greek heroes. Argos is distinguished from ordinary men by the presence of eyes scattered over his body. (For a list of vases connected with this myth, cf. Englemann, "Die Io-Sage," *Jahrbuch* [1903], pp. 37 f.) In the various representations of Medea the sorceress is recognized by her foreign type of dress and Phrygian cap (F.R., I, Pl. 9). In similar fashion the Dioscuri are recognizable by the presence of stars, piloi, oil cruses, and strigils (Huddilston, *Greek Tragedy*, p. 149).

3. Of occupations

This method served not only to distinguish gods and heroes, but to mark the occupations of everyday life by some characteristic feature. Thus, athletes were indicated by various objects used in public games or in the palaestra: the discobolos is known by his discus (cf. the early Attic Relief [B.B., Pl. 457, b], the famous Myronian statue [*ibid.*, Pl. 256], and the so-called "standing discobolus" [*ibid.*, Pl. 131]); the apoxyomenos ascribed to Lysippos is known as an athlete by the strigil (*ibid.*, Pl. 281); the girl runner (Von Mach, *Handbook of Greek and Roman Sculpture*, Pl. 73) is denoted as such by the shortness of her garment and by the laurel branch upon the stump. In this figure, as in the discolobos of Myron, the pose also helps in identification. In the latter statue the peculiar position of the arms and legs is not the normal one of a body at rest but a distinctive feature of the particular sport of discus-hurling. On many palaestra scenes on vases, the various games and contests are indicated by objects in the hands of the athletes or in the foreground or background, such as sponges, strigils, or double picks. Similarly, the housewife was known by

her basket of wool (cf. stele of Mynno, Gardner, *Tombs of Hellas*, p. 157, Fig. 62), and in later times a literary man was identified by his scroll (cf. the so-called "Demosthenes," B.B., Pl. 429). A priestess could be recognized by the key which was the badge of her office (for vase paintings illustrative of this point cf. Huddilston, *Greek Tragedy*, pp. 57, 84, etc.; and J. C. Hoppin, "Argos, Io and the Prometheus of Aeschylus," *Harvard Studies*, XII, 337, note 1).

4. Of race

Indication of race is likewise possible by means of attributes; accordingly, foreigners were marked in art by certain peculiarities of dress and equipment. Thus the Amazons on many vases are easily recognized by the long close-fitting spotted or striped garments and Phrygian headdress, as well as by the bow with the double curve, the crescent-shaped shield and the battle ax (F.R., II, Pl. 81). The Scythians and Persians are distinguished from the nude Greeks by similar long close garments and Phrygian caps (for example, *Mon. d. Inst.*, VI–VII, Pl. LXVI = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 158; *Arch. Zeit.* [1880], Pl. 15 = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 428; *Mon. d. Inst.*, I, Pl. L [B] = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 81).

5. Of time

To some scenes the Greeks desired to lend vividness by adding concrete features of time and place, and since the indication of time is not at all within the range of art and the indication of place is only possible to an art with perspective, these concepts of time and place had to be translated through the medium of symbols. The best-known suggestion of time is the representation of Helios and Selene on the east pediment of the Parthenon (*Parth. Pub.*, Pls. 1 and 6), though many similiar indications may be found on vases (cf. F.R., III, Pl. 126).

6. Of place

Sometimes the localization of scenes is indicated by the presence of characteristic features of landscape or by other details. Thus Egypt is denoted by reeds and a panther (or cat) with a bird in its mouth (*C.R., Atlas* [1862], Pl. IV, 2 = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 12), and in the statue of the Nile (B.B., Pl. 196) the location in Egypt is made certain by the presence of the crocodile, ichneumon, sphinx, and bundle of reeds. Delphi is denoted by the omphalos and tripod sacred to the oracle of Apollo at that shrine (*C.R., Atlas* [1861] Pl. IV = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 8). The coins of Catana in Sicily (Head, *H.N.*, p. 131) are given a local touch by the appear-

ance of the large beetle peculiar to Mt. Aetna. Perhaps the tiny representation of a temple façade on the Kertch vase of the contest of Athena and Poseidon (*C.R., Atlas* [1872], Pl. I = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 37) may represent the Parthenon and thus localize the scene as occurring on the Acropolis of Athens. In a vase from Ruvo showing Orestes in Tauris (*Mon. d. Inst.*, II, Pl. XLIII = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 105) the temple and altar indicate a sacred precinct and the figure of Artemis above suggests that this is her precinct.

7. Of mint

Many of the symbols which have been noted as appearing on coins were stamped there for the express purpose of identifying the issuing authority. This applies particularly to the canting, commercial, and agonistic types. Identification of mintage is the intent and purpose of the seal (*φώκη*) at Phocaea, the rose (*ῥόδον*) at Rhodes, the lion's head at Leontini, the table (*τράπεζα*) at Trapezus, the fox (*ἀλώπηξ*) at Alopeconnesus, etc. (for lists of canting symbols cf. Hill, *Handbook*, pp. 176 f.; Macdonald, *Coin Types*, pp. 18 f., and Head, *H.N.*, under "canting" in *Index Rerum*). Similarly, the wine jar of Chios, the wine cup and grapes of Naxos, the silphium of Cyrene, and the mussel of Cumae indicating the chief industry of these cities came to have the significance of a trade-mark. The agonistic types on the coins of Sicily and elsewhere identify the various cities by reference to athletic victories which had brought glory and fame. Still other symbols may be found on coins which though neither canting, commercial, nor agonistic quite plainly indicate the cities which used these symbols as badges. For instance the owl on the coins of Athens (Head, *H.N.*, pp. 366 f.) was in reality merely an attributive symbol of Athena, the patron goddess of the city; but the owl of Athens became well established as the monetary sign of that city in all parts of the Greek world and in barbarian trading stations.[1] So the winged horse (*ibid.*, pp. 398 f.), connected with Bellerophon and the spring of Peirene, served to identify the great trading city of Corinth.

8. Of monetary value

In a few instances the symbol on a coin bore a definite relation to the monetary value. Thus Gardner (*Types of Greek Coins*, p. 66) says,

[1] As an interesting sidelight on this point compare the proverb, *γλαῦκ' εἰς Ἀθήνας*, Ar. *Av.* 301, and Athenian coins as *γλαῦκες Λαυρωτικάι*, Ar. *Av.* 1106.

At Athens all the divisions of the drachm are marked by varying treatment of the invariable types, the head of Pallas and the owl. On the tetrobol there are two owls; on the diobol the owl has only one head but two bodies; on the triobol one owl is facing the spectators, etc. . . . . So in some of the Sicilian cities the four-horse chariot appears only on the tetradrachms, didrachms bear a rider who leads a second horse, drachms a single horseman. Again in Thessaly a horseman marks the diobol, a horse the obol. At Corinth the diobol bears a Pegasus on both obverse and reverse, the trihemiobol a Pegasus on the obverse and a Medusa head on the reverse. At a number of cities on the coins of which an animal is used for the type of the drachm, the forepart of that animal is impressed on the hemidrachm.

II. System of shorthand

The second important use of symbols is as a sort of shorthand system, whereby certain suggestive details serve to indicate some comprehensive concept or idea. There are two ways in which symbols are so used: first, to indicate landscape, and second, to suggest a myth or narrative.

1. To indicate landscape

The indication of landscape is by no means so rare as traditional ideas would lead one to believe. It is quite true that the Greek artist of the best period had little interest in landscape for its own sake; trees, mountains, lakes, and seas had little appeal in themselves. Nor did the lower animals have great vogue as artistic subjects, though we know that such sculptors as Kalamis and Myron made animal figures, treated realistically, according to tradition. But the primary interest of the Greek was in human beings, anthropomorphic deities, and their activities; and therefore lanscape served principally as setting or background for the drama depicted.[1] As a natural result of this attitude of mind as well as of limitations of space and medium, the artists of the best period avoided scenic detail. But often it was necessary to include sufficient indication of place to make clear the proper identification of a given scene. When such was the case, only those suggestive features were inserted which furnished a vital clue to the setting, and others were ruthlessly omitted. On the Niobid crater in the Louvre (*Mon. d. Inst.*, XI, Pl. XL = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 227) one tree indicates the forest of Mt. Sipylos.[2] On a calpis showing the

[1] The so-called Erechtheion pediment in the Acropolis Museum has some suggestions of landscape, but emphasis was not laid on details of this type until the period of the Hellenistic reliefs (Dickens, *Catalogue of the Acropolis Museum*, pp. 12, 70).

[2] In the same way, in Polygnotos' representation of Hades, a single tree stood for the grove of Persephone (Paus. x. 30. 6).

death of Argos (J. C. Hoppin, *Harvard Studies*, XII, 339) a few bushes indicate the grove of Hera at Mycenae. Similarly, the sea so hard to indicate is, on vase or coin, denoted in shorthand by a dolphin or a sea-serpent or a Triton. Notable illustrations on vases are: Apollo with his lyre sailing over the sea, indicated only by dolphins and an octopus (*Mon. d. Inst.*, I, Pl. XLVI = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 79); Heracles sailing in the bowl of the sun over a fish and an octopus (Gerhard 109 = Reinach, *Vases*, II, 59, 6); and Dionysos traveling over a sea which is denoted by six dolphins (Exekias' cylix, Gerhard, 49 = Reinach, *Vases*, II, 36, 1). On many Sicilian coins a fish in the field indicates the aquatic character of the chief type, for instance, the dolphins around the head of Arethusa on coins of Syracuse (cf. Head, *H.N.*, under Gela, Catana, Syracuse, etc.). On the frieze of the wedding of Poseidon and Amphitrite (Collignon, *Sculpture Grecque*, II, 482, Fig. 251) fishy monsters give the marine setting for the scene. Gem-cutters use the same method of shorthand to indicate the sea in the myth of Europa (Furtwängler, *A.G.*, Pl. VI, 63) and in the story of Heracles and the "Old Man of the Sea" (*ibid.*, Pl. V, 30; Pl. V, 32). Land is denoted by vegetation: on the Talos vase from Ruvo (F.R., I, Pls. 38, 39) plants represent the land and dolphins the sea; on the Phineos vase (*Mon. d. Inst.*, X, Pl. VIII = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 201) fish indicate water, and trees land. Mention has already been made of the eagle as representative of air under the feet of the Nike of Paeonios, and of a pillar or column as a distinctive feature of architectural structures (p. 7). Similarly the prow on which the Nike of Samothrace stands, serves as a sign that the victory represented was a naval achievement.[1]

2. To suggest a narrative

The second use of the shorthand symbol, that is for the purpose of suggesting a narrative, is a peculiarly Greek convention. The method of narration in art practiced by the Egyptians in their tombs and palaces was that of a series of pictures showing successive

[1] Huddilston, *Greek Tragedy*, pp. 45 f., gives an illustration of a vase painting of Electra at the stele of Agamemnon (Reinach-Millingen, *Peintures*, Pl. 14—Huddilston, Fig. 1). Near Electra stands her sister or attendant and Pylades. Seated in the corner is a youth upon whom Huddilston comments as follows, "He serves to round out the picture and indicates at the same time the attendants of Orestes." Thus he interprets this figure as an instance of one man as a shorthand representation of several

events. The same method was used by the Romans in portraying on triumphal arch or column the campaigns and victories of an emperor. Similar treatment is seen in pre-Raphaelite paintings in the Middle Ages. The stations of the Holy Cross found in cathedrals today illustrate the same mode of narration by a series of pictures. In Greek art we sometimes find on one vase three events from the same cycle, for example, the three scenes from the contest over the arms of Achilles (*Mon. d. Inst.*, VIII, Pl. XLI = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 174); or three scenes from the exploits of Theseus (Gerhard, Pl. 234 = Reinach, *Vases*, II, 118). But in addition the Greeks had a method peculiar to their own genius, whereby in one picture are included significant details from various stages in the story, thus suggesting the entire myth. This, of course, presupposes that the story in question was well known. Some of the most interesting examples of this method are those afforded by various vase paintings illustrating the contest between Peleus and Thetis. According to this well-known tale, Thetis during the violent struggle changed herself from human shape to that of one animal after another, assuming in turn the form of a lion, a panther, and a snake. But the vase-painter shows not a series of events, in one Peleus wrestling with a woman, in another with a lion, in another with a snake, but one painting of two human figures interlocked in deadly conflict while Peleus is attacked simultaneously by two panthers or by a lion and a snake.[1] An equally interesting story similarly told in shorthand is the myth of Pegasus and Medusa, according to which Pegasus sprang full grown from the headless corpse of Medusa (Hesiod *Theog.* 281 f.). On one of the metopes from temple C at Selinus (B.B., Pl. 286, B) Perseus is just ready to kill Medusa, who, however, already holds in her lap a miniature

men. There are other instances which may be of this type but they are open to other interpretations. Unless the Greeks did use this method of representing a crowd, there is nothing in Greek art which in any way corresponds to the Cretan miniature fresco from Knossos (*J.H.S.*, XXI, Pl. V), where a crowd of people is indicated. This is quite apart from the fact that in the latter case the crowd is suggested by heads in outline without bodies attached and with sex differences shown by the use of outline on red ground for men and on white ground for women.

[1] A long list of vases dealing with this myth noting the animal transformations, may be found in Botho Graef's article on "Peleus and Thetis," *Jahrbuch* (1886), pp. 192 f.

Pegasus. Similarly, in the gable of the temple at Corfu, the living Medusa moves to the right while on either side of her are Pegasus and Chrysaor. (Cf. the restoration in *Art and Arch.*, I, 153 f., Fig. 1). The metope of Heracles and the golden apples from the temple of Zeus at Olympia is also an example of a narrative told in shorthand. According to the myth, Atlas secured the apples from the garden of the Hesperides while Heracles held the world on his shoulders. When Atlas was unwilling to resume his old task, Heracles suggested that Atlas hold the world for a short time until he, Heracles, secured a cushion to ease the load; but as soon as Atlas again bore the world, Heracles hastened away with the apples. In the metope, however, Heracles already has a cushion on his shoulder as he supports the world. Thus the conclusion of the story is suggested in a representation of an earlier episode. We should also include here the tale of Eriphyle who sold her husband's life for the necklace offered her by Adrastus. On the Amphiaraos crater (*Mon. d. Inst.*, X, Pls. 4, 5 = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 199) the necklace is ostentatiously held in the hand of Eriphyle as her husband departs to the certain death to which she had betrayed him. Surely the price of her husband's life would not be held in full view at such a time and must be placed there by the vase-painter for the double purpose of identifying Eriphyle and indicating a previous scene in the same story. The Palladion carried by Diomedes is a shorthand reference which immediately served to recall the story of his theft of the image from Troy (*Mon. d. Inst.*, II, Pl. XXXV = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 102; *Mon. d. Inst.*, VI–VII, Pl. XXII = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 150; *Annali* [1858], Pl. M = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 299; *Arch. Zeit.* [1848], Pl. 17, 2 = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 368, 2). Similarly, the appearance of Sciron with rock and tortoise (*Mon. d. Inst.*, III, Pl. XLVII = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 119), of Philoctetes with a snake, of Circe with a loom, and men with the heads of animals all serve, not merely to identify a character, but also to tell a narrative. On a carnelian in Vienna (Furtwängler, *A.G.*, Pl. XIX, 4) is represented a bull with a human head, on his back lies a nymph, in front is the club of Heracles. By this device of shorthand is suggested the contest of Achelous and Heracles for the hand of Deianeira. The same story is illustrated on a sard in

Berlin (*ibid.*, Pl. XXVI, 18) where Achelous is represented by a human head with animal horns, and where club and cornucopia stand for the mighty Heracles. Successive stages of the conflict are suggested on another gem in Berlin (*ibid.*, Pl. VIII, 3) where the various transformations of Achelous are indicated by a snake and fish,[1] side by side with the human-headed bull.

III. Expression of abstract ideas and emotions

The third use of symbols is as a means of giving expression to abstract ideas and emotions. The problem of representing in artistic form such ideas and emotions is a real test of the ingenuity, the technical skill, and the quality of artistic feeling existent in a given nation. Since these abstractions are really outside the realm of ideas which can be pictorially depicted, the Greek artist had to have recourse to symbols in order to achieve artistic representation.

The most familiar type of symbol employed for this purpose is personification. This is one of the simplest forms of symbolism and probably developed very early in the history of art. It is a well-known fact that the primitive conception of deity, among the Greeks as among other peoples, was aniconic, and that the representation of gods at that period took the form of conical stones and of trees.[2] Therefore, when the period of anthropomorphic conception of deity begins, there is, in that very idea, a personification of those vegetative and fructifying forces of nature which constituted the early gods and goddesses of Greek religion. It is natural that from this beginning very frequent instances of personification should be found in Greek art.

The ideas and emotions expressed by personification are many and varied—Sleep, Death, Childhood, Love, Desire, Madness, etc. The spirit of a city or state is variously personified: sometimes as a woman, like the Tyche of Antioch (B.B., Pl. 134); sometimes as a male figure, Demos (Reinach, *Reliefs*, Vol. II, No. 5, pp. 252, 333–36); at other times the patron goddess of a city becomes the personification of that city, for instance, on the stele commemorating the Samian treaty Athena represents Athens. Akin to the phase just mentioned is the female figure of Olympias, as the embodiment

[1] This is quite apart from the significance of fish discussed on p. 6.

[2] For instance, the connection of Zeus at Dodona with the oak tree probably means that the god was originally worshiped under the form of a tree.

of the Olympic games, on a pan-Athenaic amphora in Boston (*A.J.A.* [1906], p. 392, Fig. 4). Among the personifications of abstractions one of the most interesting is the attempt to depict the soul. Roscher notes the use of a helmeted bird on a Corinthian aryballos to denote the so-called "bird-soul" (Roscher, *Lexikon*, III, 2, 3216, Fig. 4; Weicker, *Seelenvogel*, Fig. 68). On an amphora by Exekias in the Louvre (Gerhard, Pl. 107 = Reinach, *Vases*, II, 59; *Annali* [1883], Pl. 2 = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 347) a "bird-soul" flies over Eos who carries the body of Memnon. This may be merely a tradition handed down to the Greeks by the Egyptians. The most frequent representation of the soul is as an εἴδωλον. For instance, on an amphora showing Hector's body dragged along the ground by Achilles (Gerhard, Pl. 199 = Reinach, *Vases*, II, 100) there is in the upper right-hand corner a tiny winged and armed figure, representing the soul of the dead Trojan warrior. Likewise, there are on vases a number of representations of Hermes weighing the *eidola* of Achilles and Memnon in the presence of Eos and Thetis (*Mon. d. Inst.*, VI–VII, Pl. V = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 144).[1] Still another representation of the soul is a butterfly (Roscher, *Lexikon*, III, 2, 3234–36). The idea in the butterfly later develops into a woman with a butterfly's wings, as in the group of Eros and Psyche (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 3243 f.).

Furthermore, certain complex ideas and elaborations of thought receive expression through personification. The figure of Father Nile and the Tyche of Antioch are notable instances. Others belonging to the same group are the Apotheosis of Homer (B.B., Pl. 50), the bust of Africa in the Boscoreale Treasure (*Mon. Piot.*, V, Pl. I), and the Tazza Farnese cameo (Furtwängler, *A.G.*, Pl. LV). Two famous instances of such complex ideas are noted in literary references, namely, the statue of Opportunity by Lysippos and the picture of Calumny painted by the great Apelles (cf. the idea of Calumny painted by Botticelli from Lucian's description of Apelles' picture).

Thus personification afforded a satisfactory means of expressing certain abstract ideas like Death, Sleep, Victory, and the like, the spirit or genius of a city, the intangible concept of a soul, and

[1] Perhaps the central portion of the Boston Counterpart to the Ludovisi throne should be mentioned here.

various complex ideas. Yet the very nature of personification limits the ideas which can be expressed by this means. For instance, it is almost impossible to conceive of any idea of motion, of growth, or of development being expressed by personification. It is natural, therefore, that other methods grew up side by side with personification for the expression of abstract ideas and emotions.

One of these methods is the use of analogy, whereby an object which suggests some characteristic feature of an abstract idea serves as a substitute for that idea. When the Greeks desired to express the idea of the thunderbolt as something which sped quickly through the air, no way seemed more simple and adequate than to add wings to the bolt (cf. coins of Elis, Head, *H.N.*, pp. 419 f.). Similarly, strings of tow wound together into the shape of a spindle seemed the easiest method of hinting at possibilities of destructive fire, for, as a torch thus wound could blaze brightly and bring injury, so could the fateful bolt of Zeus bring destruction (*ibid*). Similarly, the wings of the sandals and cap of Hermes suggested swift progress through the air on the part of the messenger god. It is probable that attributes of other deities are to be referred to a similar origin. The pomegranate which Aphrodite often holds seems to be a reference to fertility and productivity, and the cornucopia which accompanies Demeter is by analogy a symbol of plenty and abundance. The various deities connected more or less closely with the underworld are denoted as chthonian by the presence of torches needed to lighten the darkness and gloom of the lower world. I have already mentioned the representation of the pig of purification and of the birds mating as a reference to human marriage and the significance of the phallic signs as emblems of fertility. The abstract ideas which can be represented by analogy are obviously varied in character. It is quite probable that on certain coins of Syracuse which show on the obverse the head of Zeus Eleutherios and on the reverse a free horse (*ibid.*, p. 179) the coin types are to be taken as emblems of freedom and democracy. Possibly the head of Vulcan on the coins of Aesernia in Samnium may be a hint at the prevalence of earthquakes.[1] On a red figured

[1] Head, *H.N.*, p. 27, "The head of Vulcan is appropriate in a country where earthquakes are of frequent occurrence, supposing that the connection between seismic and volcanic phenomena was recognized in the third century B.C."

vase in Petrograd (*Mon. d. Inst.*, II, Pl. XXIV = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 96, 6) a bearded man, an ephebe, and a child watch a swallow and cry out that spring has come. Evidently in this painting the coming of spring, which could not by its very nature be literally represented in art, is suggested by a bird whose coming is almost synchronous with that of spring. It is interesting to note that from early times the swallow has thus been esteemed a harbinger of spring.

A third method of expressing abstractions is by the use of physical terms for ideas which are really in the realm of the spiritual. It is particularly hard to express artistically the ideas of the spiritual and the supernatural. One realizes this fully in Christian art, since most of the pictures of the Madonna and Child are simply more or less faithful portraits of humble mortals known to the artist and completely lack even the semblance of divinity. This problem, too, the Greeks solved by symbols used according to conventional formulas. As noted in the previous chapter, apparently the inferiority of mortal to deity or heroized dead was expressed by smaller dimensions. Thus physical size became a symbol for spiritual superiority, as on the Spartan Relief (B.B., Pl. 227), the Harpy Monument (*ibid.*, Pls. 146, 147), and the Relief of Hermes and the Nymphs (*ibid.*, Pl. 61). We have already called attention to the fact of the smaller size of mortals in relief sculpture on temples, and to the probability that the large number of colossal statues known to have existed proves that the Greeks translated the superhuman power of their deities in terms of physical size.

In other cases, where an emotion or sensation was to be represented, the cause of the reaction was substituted for the effect, or vice versa, the effect was represented instead of the cause. Fear could be indicated by personification; indeed, it was so treated on the vases where a figure inscribed Phobos serves as charioteer for Heracles (*Mon. d. Inst.*, XI, Pl. XXIV = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 223; Gerhard, 122–23 = Reinach, *Vases*, II, 66). On the other hand, the representation of some wild animal, such as a bear, which is a possible material cause for terror could suggest the emotion which is so difficult to express. An instance of cause for effect may be found on the interior of the Sosias cylix (F.R., II,

Pl. 123), where the arrow at the left serves to suggest the pain which the wounded hero suffers. Likewise, the snake which accompanies Philoctetes indicates the suffering which he endured so long (*Mon. d. Inst.*, VI–VII, Pl. VIII = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 145; *Arch. Zeit.* [1845], Pls. 35, 36 = Reinach, *Vases*, I, 358, 5).

The myth of Philoctetes also exemplifies the representation of effect for cause, in that this hero is generally shown limping. This may be a touch of realism, but it seems likely that it is also a method of suggesting pain by depicting the effect, since the pain itself cannot be directly indicated. An instance of the use of effect for cause to indicate an abstract idea may be found in the statues from the Nereid Monument (B.B., Pls. 211–12). The drapery of these figures has the appearance of being driven against the body by a gale or by the surge of billows, and thereby represents sculpturally the force of wind or wave. Other instances of abstract ideas expressed by this means have already been mentioned on page 14.

IV. Allusion to historical events

A fourth use of symbolism is to allude to historical events. It is natural to find instances of this use of symbolism among coin types, since coins, more than any other artistic medium, bear a definite relation to contemporaneous events. The Demarateia of Syracuse, generally accepted as an issue made after the successful termination of the war with Carthage, show in the exergue a lion running. Hill (*Coins of Sicily*, Pl. II, 6, 7, pp. 55 f.) interprets this as an "emblem of the subdued and fleeing forces of Africa," while Head notes in the same connection that the lion is a symbol of conquered Libya (Head, *H.N.*, p. 173). Thus we have good grounds for considering the Demarateia as an example of the use of symbols to allude to historical events. Probably the pistrix on the exergue of a Syracusan coin of the same period (Hill, *Coins of Sicily*, Pl. II, 8, p. 57) is a reference to the great naval victory of Hiero over the Etruscans in 474 B.C.

At a later period, some of the Syracusan coins bearing Cimon's signature show in the exergue a panoply with the word "athla." Head (*H.N.*, pp. 176 f.) and Hill (*Coins of Sicily*, pp. 100 f.) agree that this must be a reference to arms taken from the defeated Athenians after the battle of the Assinarus and offered as prizes in the games which celebrated that victory. Still later in the

history of Syracuse, in the reign of the tyrant Agathocles, a triskeles appears in the field above the usual quadriga. There has been much doubt as to the meaning of this symbol. Some assume it to be a sign representing the whole island, and others assert that it is the badge of Agathocles; but according to either interpretation it refers to the period of Agathocles and his conquest of all Sicily.[1] Demetrius Poliorcetes used the same theme as the Nike of Samothrace for his coin type in order to commemorate the naval victory of his fleet over Ptolemy in 306 B.C. (Head, *H.N.*, p. 229). Again, one of the coins of Macedon inscribed with the name of Antigonos shows the prow of a boat upon which is seated a nude Apollo holding a bow (*ibid.*, p. 231). This is certainly a reference to a naval victory, whether it applies to the success of Antigonos Gonatas over the Egyptian fleet in 253 B.C. or to the fortunate expedition against Caria in 228 B.C. by Antigonos Doson.[2]

In some instances an important event is indicated not by a special symbol but rather by a combination of previously known symbols. This is the case with certain coins of Sybaris and Poseidonia: on the obverse is Poseidon and his trident, the badge of Poseidonia, and on the reverse, the standing bull of Sybaris (*ibid.*, p. 85). The union of the types of these two cities on a single coin must indicate some close bond such as an alliance between them.

[1] Hill, *Coins of Sicily*, pp. 152 f., "Coins issued from this time until the date of his invasion of Africa do not bear his name; but they are distinguished from all earlier Syracusan issues by the appearance of the three-legged symbol, popularly called *triquetra*, but more correctly *triskeles*. This symbol, whatever may be its meaning in other parts of the world, is generally supposed to be the emblem of the three-cornered island Trinacria. Yet we must hesitate somewhat to admit that, several years before the conquests of Agathocles gave them the right to make such a claim, the Syracusans placed upon their coins an emblem which implied domination over the whole island. It is not impossible that the triskeles was originally the private signet of Agathocles, and that its adoption as the emblem of all Sicily belongs to a later date. Were it otherwise, we should expect to find it used prominently in the time of kings Pyrrhus and Hiera, who were recognized as kings of the Siceliotes. As a matter of fact, except on the coins of Agathocles, it is never or rarely found in Sicily save on coins of Roman date; and to the Romans, therefore, we may perhaps attribute the extension of its significance."

[2] On the coins of Croton (Head, *H.N.*, p. 97) is the type of Heracles strangling two serpents. Head says apropos of these coins, "About 390 B.C. the Greek cities of South Italy were threatened on one hand by the Lucanians and on the other by Dionysus of Syracuse. The idea of the infant Heracles strangling the two serpents is symbolical of free and unified Hellas over Barbarism and Tyranny."

V. Protection against evil

A fifth use of symbolism (which the Greeks shared in common with other peoples) was to ward off dangers, such as the evil eye and other forms of magic spells, to secure blessings instead of curses from the demonic forces with which their imagination peopled the world. Just as the ankh of the Egyptians served as a protective sign, so did the apotropaic eye and the gorgoneion for the Greeks. There is no evidence in Greek art that charms and amulets were used for curative purposes or to bring down evil upon one's enemies, although the existence of both of these ideas can be traced in Greek literature.

In reviewing the contents of this chapter it should be very apparent that all these uses of symbolism (except the last) grew out of the artist's incapacity to picture directly what he wished to show. He could not show Athena except by giving her an identifying attribute; he could not show a victor as a victor except by adding some object of the palaestra or games; he could not show foreign people except by the simplest distinction of garb or weapon; he could not picture place and circumstance fully and so had to hint at them by some tell-tale accessory; he could not narrate a long adventure circumstantially and by repetition, and so had to condense it into an impossible single scene with symbolic allusions to antecedent and consequent events. Since ideas and conditions could not be pictured directly, recourse had to be taken to symbols which should suggest or arouse those same ideas or emotions for the spectator. It is important to observe that where the artist could picture what he wished to show he did not use symbols because symbols would have added nothing. It follows that we may assert as conclusions to this part of our dissertation:

1. That symbols are an indication of impotence on the part of the artist to show his intention pictorially.

2. That as technical proficiency increases many of these symbols slough off as unnecessary.[1]

3. That Greek art had very little use for symbols except as an aid to the artist for purely representational purposes.

[1] It is worthy of note, however, that religious conservatism preserved symbols even when they were no longer artistically necessary (Gardner, *Principles of Greek Art*, p. 92). Furthermore, one group of symbols increases rather than decreases in the Hellenistic period, namely, allegory.

CHAPTER IV

RELATION OF SYMBOLS TO THE MEDIUM

As we have just noted, the use of symbols is an indication of the inability of the artist to express his ideas pictorially. This impotence often arises out of the restrictions placed upon the artist by the medium in which he is working. Waldstein recognizes the importance of the medium when he says, "Each new material requires, and consequently finds or evolves, a new technical treatment, new drawing, new design, and new modelling" (Waldstein, *Greek Sculpture and Modern Art*, p. 2). It is obvious that an idea could be expressed by one method in a certain medium, but that the same method might prove utterly inadequate in another medium. For instance, in painting, the sun could be represented by the conventional disk, rayed or unrayed, which has come to be the pictorial symbol for the sun; the moon could be represented by a similarly stylized disk or crescent. But for sculpture in the round, such treatment would be entirely out of harmony and would produce an almost grotesque effect; therefore, in the pediment of the Parthenon the sun is personified as a male figure driving his horses and the moon as a female figure similarly occupied. Rivers could be represented in a landscape, but it would be no easy task to depict a river with proper perspective in sculpture or on vase or coin. Yet one must not fancy the Greek artist consciously choosing from a recognized repertoire of symbols and saying to himself, "This fits my medium, but that does not." Rather, the medium itself gave no scope for the use of those symbols which were not suitable. In other words, the medium governed the artist and not vice versa.

An examination of the characteristics of each medium and of the ideas expressed therein by Greek artists will strengthen the conclusions of the last chapter that the Greeks only used symbols when they were unable to express their ideas pictorially.

Sculpture in the round, as work in three dimensions, calls for single subjects simply treated rather than for complexity of subject,

and for broadness of treatment rather than for wealth of detail. In connection with Greek figures, Pater says,

> For such youth in its very essence is a matter properly within the limits of the visible, the empirical, world; and in the presentment of it there will be no place for symbolic hint, none of that reliance on the helpful imagination of the spectator, the legitimate scope of which is a large one, when art is dealing with religious objects, with what in the fulness of its own nature is not really expressible at all. . . . . It is an age clearly of faithful observation, of what we call realism, alike in its iconic and heroic work; and in the presentment of divine or abstract types. And if art was still to minister to the religious sense, it could only be by clothing celestial spirits also as nearly as possible in the bodily semblance of the various athletic combatants, whose patrons respectively they were supposed to be [Pater, *Greek Studies*, pp. 300 f.].

The subjects, therefore, of Greek sculpture were human beings and deities so anthropomorphic in character that they were conceived of as actual visible beings. By way of contrast to Greek sculpture, let us note the ideas expressed by Hindu sculpture. The chief characteristic of that art is the desire to express cosmic forces, mystical ideas quite beyond the realm of the physical world. For example, the three aspects of the Essence of Matter is not an idea within the possibility of representation and must therefore be suggested symbolically by a three-headed deity, the Trimûrti; spiritual insight or vision cannot be literally represented, therefore a third eye was added to the two eyes of physical vision; the omnipotence of deity is impossible to express, except through symbolic means, e.g., by representing many arms. Thus the nature of the ideas, not the limits of technique, force Hindu art to use symbolism; while Greek art, as we have seen, strove to express ideas within the realm of the physical world. In early Greek sculpture such types of symbols as the "attributive" and the "physical for spiritual" appear because lack of technical skill prevented the artist from distinguishing and characterizing his personages. But as Greek art developed and attained technical perfection these symbols gradually disappear:

> As Greek art grew towards maturity, it discarded this inartistic and conventional symbolism. . . . . It is true that deities to the last, especially in their formal cultus images, retained attributes indicating their special provinces or functions. . . . . But these attributes were little more than survivals; in

the meantime the Greek artists had discovered a more excellent way for indicating the character and the functions of the deities. . . . . A mere external symbolism gave place to an incorporation in the figure itself of its divine attributes [Gardner, *Principles of Greek Art*, p. 92].

For example, the earlier figures of Hermes are always distinguished by kerykeion, petasos, or winged sandals, but the Hermes of Praxiteles possesses no such symbols. Greek art, we may conclude, recognized as the true aim of sculpture, the representation of objects in the physical world, particularly the human figure. The necessity, therefore, of symbols as a result of technical immaturity, disappears during the period of technical perfection and of clearer recognition of this ideal of sculpture.

Owing to the similarity of material and to the tendency of relief to approach work in three dimensions instead of pure line work on the level of one plane, the technical problems of relief are akin to those of sculpture in the round rather than to those of drawing, although relief is probably closer in origin to the latter. Relief also had aims and ideals close to those of sculpture in the round; and here again the chief interest was in the representation of objects and ideas within the realm of the physical world, particularly human beings and anthropomorphic deities. On the architectural reliefs, such as those of the treasury of the Sicyonians at Delphi, the so-called Theseum at Athens, and of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, the human achievements of various deities or demigods serve as subject-matter, while on the frieze of the Parthenon the human worshipers are the focus of attention. On smaller reliefs such as the Spartan Relief the heroized dead receive homage from their survivors; on the Eleusinian Relief is represented the human theophany of Demeter and Persephone; on grave stelae human beings are depicted in the attitudes of daily life. Thus in relief the ideas represented do not by their content force the artists to use symbolism, and the symbols, such as the "attributive" and the "physical for spiritual," which occur, particularly in the earlier period, are due to incomplete mastery of technical processes. In relief, as in sculpture in the round, Hindu art offers a striking contrast to Greek art. For instance, one of the most striking of the Hindu reliefs is the representation "of the churning of the

waters of chaos, a cosmic struggle between good and evil" (Havell, *Ideals of Indian Art*, p. 64, Pl. IV). Such ideas as this demand the use of symbolism because they are incapable of literal representation.

In vase-painting a larger number of symbols exist than in either form of sculpture. This is due largely to the additional limitations imposed by this medium. In the first place, the small space imposes certain restrictions—true, miniature work like that of the Renaissance reproduces faithfully large objects on a minute scale, but miniatures are the product of a fully developed, even sophisticated art, and such a description is not applicable to Greek vases of the sixth to fourth centuries before Christ. Furthermore, the medium again imposes a limitation, for the fabric of pottery does not lend itself to the elaborate detail and superfine work of miniatures. (Such works of the Renaissance were in harder material such as ivory or stone.) In the second place, in vases there is that problem so difficult for a primitive draughtsman to solve, namely, the depicting of three dimensional objects in two dimensional space. In the third place, there is a problem akin to the last, the representation of vista and perspective. Where the early Greek artisan could not solve these problems, he resorted to symbolism as a way out of the difficulty. One element of the content of the ideas represented affects symbols on vases, and that is the narrative element. Although the scenes on Greek vases represent beings who are visually and physically conceived, yet the problem of indicating successive events in the same story caused suggestive details to be included in one picture.

Although no examples of Greek wall painting or easel painting have survived, yet references in classical authors and the evidence from Pompeian wall paintings permit us to conjecture that the symbolism existing in that medium may have been of the same varieties which existed on vases; for example, Pausanias states that a single tree stood for the grove of Persephone (Paus. x. 30. 6). Presumably similar problems had to be solved in this, as in the kindred medium, because of the difficulty of representing three dimensional objects in two dimensional space and the difficulty of representing vista or perspective.

In dealing with the problem of the medium so far as it affects the symbols on coins, it is necessary to remember that the important feature of a coin is that it must bear upon it the sign and seal of the monetary authority responsible for the issue. In coins the ideas represented had a larger share in deciding what use should be made of symbols than in any other medium mentioned. Up to the time of Alexander it was not customary for the heads of individual rulers to be represented on coins. Nor were written labels frequent in the early issues as a means of stating authority and value. In most cases the issuing authority was a city-state, and it is by no means an easy task to represent a city on a coin. One solution was to represent the name of the city as a physical object—the so-called "canting type" of symbol; another solution was to represent some article of commerce peculiar to that city; another was to represent some geographical peculiarity of the site; another was the representation of a renowned athletic victory; finally, a patron deity or eponymous hero might be represented. Thus symbols have a very important rôle upon coins, owing to the peculiar demands in this medium. Technical difficulties such as the restrictions of space and the representation of three dimensional objects also had their influence upon the symbols which appear upon coins.

With regard to gems the limitations of the medium again affect the use of symbols. The very small size precludes the use of more than one or two figures. These figures were usually mythological; and as the small size prevented artistic delineation of characters through individualization of features, attributes were necessary for the recognition of the personages. Scenic features such as the sea had also to be suggested by symbols, because of the restricted area. In the fine period of gem-cutting when the adaptability of a head to the space was recognized, symbols became less frequent. Thus, as in sculpture, a truer realization of the ideals to be represented in the medium and a fuller mastery of technical execution led to a decrease of symbols.

Terra cottas display very little that is peculiar to the fabric. The artisans who worked in this medium dealt with everyday life and were inclined toward realism and genre rather than toward that idealism which compels the use of symbols through inability

to express ideas. In so far as terra cottas represented divine beings, they borrowed their ideas of deity from sculpture, and, therefore, their symbols.

In architecture symbols are not as prevalent as in the other arts which we have discussed. This medium has a twofold nature—structural and decorative. On the structural side, many of the features of architecture are not the result of free will or fancy on the part of man, the architect, but are the result of conditions inherent in the character of the medium itself, since in many respects architecture is akin to engineering and therefore approaches mechanical rather than aesthetic art. Yet certain features in its structural form appear to have symbolic significance. Whether or not one accepts the theory that the Mycenean megaron is the prototype of the Greek temple, it is an accepted fact that the temple was conceived of as the abode of the deity, and that the nucleus of the plan of a temple is a primitive house. This idea of the temple as a home of the god carries out the same anthropomorphic conception of deity seen in other phases of Greek art. Symbolism is seen in the large size and the durability of Greek temples. Since the God was greater, more powerful, and of longer life than mortal man, his house must be larger and of greater durability than human habitations. Thus we have spiritual ideas expressed by physical terms.

The orientation of Greek temples may have had symbolic import. The fixed rule was that the main entrance to the temple should be on the east (at Bassae where the exigencies of space forced a north and south orientation, a door was cut in the long eastern side). Probably this was symbolism by analogy: since gods of the upper air were those chiefly honored by temples, their abodes should face in the direction of the first rays of that light which distinguished the upper air from the darkness of the lower world. The theory that this temple to Apollo (at Bassae) might have been hypaethral, as was the temple at Didyma, may supply a further instance of analogy, since the temple to a health-god might well be left open to air and sun.

On the decorative side also certain indications of symbolism should be noted. The acroteria were important architectural

features from a very early period; according to one interpretation they were prophylactic representations of the solar disk (Cook, *Zeus*, p. 292; Benndorf, "Über den Ursprung der Giebelakroterien," *Jahresh. d. oest. arch. Inst.*, II [1899], pp. 1–51).[1] There is also a possibility that the whole idea of sculptural decoration of the pediments is due to an early representation of a prophylactic serpent in the gable. This theory is strengthened by the instances of early poros pediments in which serpentine forms predominate. The Medusa in the gable of the temple at Corfu increases the possibility that there was sometimes a magic purpose in pedimental sculpture. In the coffer blocks of the ceiling of the peristyle bronze rosettes were fastened; and perhaps we may see in them a symbolic representation of stars and a suggestion of the vault of heaven. We know that a symbolic suggestion of the sky existed in Egyptian decoration, at Deir-el-Bahri in a temple of the Eighteenth Dynasty (Maspero, *Manual of Egyptian Archaeology*, pp. 110–12). It is doubtful, however, if there is any symbolic suggestion in the Greek use of bronze rosettes. Often when symbols are borrowed from another country, they lose their symbolic significance and become merely decorative features.

Thus in each medium in Greek art the ideas which are represented govern the symbols used in that medium. In so far as these ideas are purely representational, and are concerned with the reproduction of real features of the physical world, symbols tend to disappear in proportion as the technical side of the art comes to perfection.

[1] Note also the theory that the acroterion was derived from the horns of consecration, Lethaby, *Architecture*, p. 101.

CHAPTER V

COMPARISON OF GREEK SYMBOLISM WITH THE SYMBOLISM OF OTHER COUNTRIES

Even after so detailed an examination of the types and uses of symbols in Greek art, our understanding of Greek artistic symbolism will not be complete or adequate without a comparison with the artistic symbolism of other countries.

Certain obvious similarities in the types of symbols used elsewhere than in Greek art may be briefly noted. Attributive symbols are widely employed for identifying characters, whether human or divine. The whip and scepter of Osiris and the girdle tie of Isis are familiar examples from Egyptian art. In Assyrian art the winged disk is an attribute of Ashur, while the lion is an attribute of the Babylonian deity Marduk. The dragon with five claws is a symbol peculiar to the emperor of China (Tredwell, *Chinese Art Motives*, pp. 31–36). In Japan, Ebisu (Yebisu), the Shintoist god of daily food (Allen, *Japanese Art Motives*, p. 120), carries a fishing-rod and basket of fish as his attributes; while Kashin, the god of roads, is accompanied by the three mystic monkeys (Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 136). In Hindu art the swan, the eagle, and the bull serve as attributes as well as vehicles (*vahan*) to Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva respectively. The cobra is also an attribute of Siva (Havell, *Ideals of Indian Art*, pp. 71 f.). Coatlicue, an earth-goddess of Mexico, wears a skirt woven of snakes as her attribute (Spinden, *Civilizations of Mexico*, p. 195, Pl. XL); Xochipilli, god of flowers, dance, and song, wears the high crest of a coxcoxtli bird on his head and a white butterfly painted on his mouth (Joyce, *Mex. Arch.*, p. 42, Pl. V, 1). Christian art distinguished a multitude of personages by their attributes: the winged lion of St. Mark and the keys of St. Peter are characteristic examples.

Personification is another type of symbol which appears in the arts of many countries. A familiar example from Egypt is the representation of the sky by the outstretched figure of the goddess

Nut, supported by the god Shu who, in turn, personifies the air (Della Seta, *Religion and Art*, p. 80, Fig. 15). From Mesopotamia we have a quasi-human representation of the southwest wind (Perrot and Chipiez, *Chaldaea and Assyria*, II, p. 80, Fig. 32) as well as several anthropomorphic representations of various solar, stellar, and lunar forces: Shamash, Sin, and Ishtar are examples among Babylonian deities. In Assyrian art the winged disk, an aniconic symbol of Ashur, gradually becomes anthropomorphic (Jastrow, *Religious Belief in Babylonia and Assyria*, Pl. 18, Fig. 1). In Hindu art personification is frequent in its appearance and varied in its forms. Two well-known examples may serve as illustrations: the three-headed deity symbolizing the Essence of Matter (Havell, *Ideals of Indian Art*, p. 67), and worldly wisdom, personified by the god Ganesha who has an elephant's head on an infant's body (Havell, *op. cit.*, p. 84, Pl. X). In Chinese art certain fabulous animals are the personifications of ideas which are not capable of literal artistic interpretation: the dragon represents the thunder-clouds of summer (Ferguson, *Outlines of Chinese Art*, Introduction, p. 15); and the unicorn is the incarnation of the five primordial elements (Paléologue, *L'Art Chinois*, p. 24). In Mexican art a monster with gaping jaws represents the earth (Joyce, *Mexican Archaeology*, p. 233). In Japanese art various animals serve as personifications of abstract ideas or natural phenomena: the lion is the personification of divine protection, the dragon symbolizes power, and the tiger is the incarnation of thunder (Allen, *Japanese Art Motives*, pp. 52–53). In Christian art the serpent appears as the personification of evil and the dove as the incarnation of the Holy Ghost.

Representative symbols are found in the art of various countries. On the Egyptian wall paintings from the tombs of Beni-Hasan there are many instances of a river suggested by fish, hippopotamos, or crocodile (cf. Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, Part I, Pl. XXIX; Part II, Pl. IV). The reliefs from the palace of Sargon at Khorsabad furnish an Assyrian example of the representative type of symbol: many small boats, with three or four men each, are transporting wood across a stream, the water is indicated by numerous fish, turtles, crabs, water-serpents, shells, etc. (Jastrow, *Civilization of*

Babylonia and Assyria, p. 403, Pl. LVI, Fig. 2). On a page from the Codex Nuttall from Mexico, the sea is indicated by a crocodile, a flying fish, a sea-serpent, and a bivalve shell (Spinden, *Civilizations of Mexico*, p. 219, Pl. XLIII, a). In many early Christian paintings of the Fall of Man the scenic setting in the Garden of Eden is suggested only by the presence of the one tree encircled by the serpent.

Physical symbols for spiritual ideas are not limited to Greek art any more than the types we have already mentioned. In Egyptian art the king is of much larger size than his subjects, the dead are larger than the living, and the god is larger than his devotees (Maspero, *Manual of Egyptian Archaeology*, p. 206). Instances of this are familiar both in relief and painting; even in the archaic palette of Narmer the king is much larger than his subjects or his foes (Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 232, Figs. 197, 198). The same rule held true in Mesopotamia. For example, on the placque of Ur-Nina of Lagash that king is much larger than the rest of his family (Jastrow, *Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 386, Pl. XLVI, Fig. 1). In Chinese art, Ferguson comments on "the adaptation of the size of the figure to the relative importance of the person represented" (Ferguson, *Outlines of Chinese Art*, p. 94).

A play upon words seems a natural method of artistic symbolism, if one may judge by the appearance of canting symbols in the arts of widely separated countries. Maspero explains the canting significance of the Egyptian scarab in the following words, "This insect was called *kheper* and it is supposed that its name was derived from the root *khepra*, 'to become.' By an obvious play on the words the beetle was made the emblem of terrestrial existence" (Maspero, *Manual of Egyptian Archaeology*, p. 278). In China, a lion represented a teacher, because the word *shih* is the same for both (Ferguson, *Outlines of Chinese Art*, p. 197); a bat represents happiness by a similar play on words (Tredwell, *Chinese Art Motives*, p. 22). In Japan, similarly, the bean is a symbol of bodily health, because a word which is pronounced the same as bean, but written with a different character, means "robust" (Allen, *Japanese Art Motives*, p. 35); seaweed signifies joy or gladness by a pun on the

verb "to rejoice" (Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 37). The Mexican deity, Uitzilopochtli, usually appears in the dress of a humming bird (Uitzitzilin) "in punning allusion to his name" (Joyce, *Mexican Archaeology*, p. 32). In Christian art, there is a punning relation between the names of several saints and the attributes which appear with them, for instance, the lamb of St. Agnes, the horn of St. Cornelius, and the scythe of St. Sidwell (Geldart, *Manual of Church Decoration and Symbolism*, p. 76).

The type of symbol which represents an analogous idea instead of the original concept is also found among other nations than the Greeks. On the slate palette of Nar-Mer from Egypt, a bull is shown breaking into an inclosure and trampling on a human body. There seems no doubt that this represents the king overcoming his foes (Quibell, *Hierakonpolis*, Pt. I, p. 10, Pl. XXIX). On the Stele of the Vultures from Mesopotamia, the net with human figures undoubtedly indicates the capture of enemies (Jastrow, *Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 387, Pl. XLVII, Fig. 2). Hindu art represents the reincarnation of the soul under the guise of a snake, in allusion to its habit of shedding the old skin (Havell, *Ideals of Indian Art*, p. 59). In all Buddhist art the white flowers of the lotus are emblematic of purity. Among the Chinese the moon is often represented with its base half covered by waves in acknowledgment of lunar influence on the tides (Tredwell, *Chinese Art Motives*, p. 20). The Mexican maize-god, Cinteotl, is represented "with a vertical line leading down his cheek, probably representing tears, and symbolizing the fertilizing rain" (Joyce, *Mexican Archaeology*, p. 38). In Maya art the frequent representation of a human head in the snake's mouth indicates "innate human intelligence" (Spinden, *A Study of Maya Art*, p. 239). In Christian art various flowers represented qualities which the appearance of the flower suggested. Thus the lily typified purity, the rose, charity or the blood of martyrs, the violet, humility, etc. (Haig, *Floral Symbolism*, p. 28). Various animals typified qualities: the ox was an example of patience and strength and the lion of strength (Jenner, *Christian Symbolism*, p. 146).

Magic symbols are common to all primitive peoples in the animistic stage of religion and survive into the theistic stage. Della

Seta comments that not only the needs of life but of death were related to the use of magic in plastic art (Della Seta, *Religion and Art*, p. 41). In Egypt and in early China we find the apotropaic eye (Maspero, *Manual of Egyptian Archaeology*, p. 278; Fenellosa, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*, I, p. 8). Egypt possessed many other magic symbols such as the scarab, the girdle tie of Isis and the crux ansata (Maspero, *Manual of Egyptian Archaeology*, p. 278). In Mesopotamia an image of the demon of the southwest wind was hung up at door or window to scare away evil spirits (Handcock, *Mesopotamian Archaeology*, p. 262). The winged monsters which were at the portals of a palace were also intended to ward off attacks of evil spirits (Handcock, *op. cit.*, p. 238). The Hindus used jewels and gems as a protection against evil; upon some charms the "five weapons of Vishnu" were engraved (Coomaraswamy, *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 154). The Japanese wear the swastika as a guard against evil (Otto and Holbrook, *Mythological Japan*, p. 50). Chinese art uses one of twelve animals of the Zodiac as protection during the period when that animal is in the ascendancy (Paléologue, *L'Art Chinois*, p. 68).

In addition to these similarities in the general types, we may note some interesting parallels in specific symbols. The sphinx appears in Egyptian and Mycenean art as well as in Greek art. The thunderbolt appears as the attribute of the Mesopotamian deity Adad. Phallic emblems appear in many widely scattered countries, for instance, as the lingam of Siva in India. The prophylactic eye appears in Egypt and in primitive Chinese art. The Greek idea of the soul as a butterfly appears also in Japan (Allen, *Japanese Art Motives*, p. 81); and the Mexican idea of souls as humming birds and moths is also noteworthy (Joyce, *Mexican Archaeology*, pp. 102–3).

Some of these similarities obviously can be explained as inheritances or as migration of symbols. Yet even D'Alviella, the ardent apostle of the migration theory, classes many of the common and familiar types of symbols as spontaneous inventions:

> There exists a symbolism so natural that, after the manner of certain implements peculiar to the stone ages, it does not belong to any definite region or race, but constitutes a characteristic feature of humanity in a certain phase

of development. To this category belong, for example, the representation of the sun by a disk or radiating face, of the moon by a crescent, of the air by birds, of the water by fishes, also by a wavy line, and so forth. Perhaps certain more complicated analogies should be added to these, such as the symbolizing of the different phases of human existence by the life of the tree, the generative forces of nature by the phallic emblems, the divine triads and generally every triple combination whose members are equal, by the equilateral triangle, and lastly, the four main directions of space by the cross [D'Alviella, *Migration of Symbols*, p. 12].

We have arrived, therefore, at a twofold conclusion: first, the majority of symbols in Greek art are of types common to many lands and nations; second, a large share of these symbols owe their origin to an early stage of artistic development in which technical perfection had not yet been reached.

In spite of these obvious similarities to the symbolism of other countries, one instinctively feels that there is a peculiarly Hellenic character to Greek symbolism. We shall therefore examine the differences from the symbolism of other countries in order to see whether this impression is correct.

Two types of symbols are found in Greek art which are not found elsewhere, namely, commercial and agonistic types. In addition, two other types appear in Greek art which rarely occur in other countries: cause for effect and effect for cause.

Yet the real and vital difference lies, not in the existence or non-existence of certain types of symbols, but in the attitude toward symbols and the application of them to the problems in hand.

One important difference from other countries is that Greek symbols are simple, easy to read, and almost self-interpretive. Perhaps that is the reason why we have not had more discussions and treatises on symbolism, for few, indeed, are the Greek symbols whose significance we fail to understand. Greek symbolism had none of that conscious veiling of meaning from the eyes of the uninitiate, none of that deliberate striving toward the esoteric, which characterizes the art of other countries. Early Christian symbolism was "constructed so that it should be understood fully by the initiated only" (Jenner, *Christian Symbolism*, Introduction, p. xiv). In Buddhist art it is a well-recognized fact that the symbols were esoteric. Anesaki says regarding Buddhist symbol-

ism: "To know all these signs and their symbolic meanings is a hard task, and we, the uninitiated, must remain satisfied with being told that the possible deities and symbols are as many as the atoms of the Universe" (Anesaki, *Buddhist Art and Its Relation to Buddhist Ideals*, p. 35). Hartmann calls Buddhist symbolism in Japan "an inextricable network" (Hartman, *Japanese Art*, p. 34), and describes the impression on one as a "sensation of bewilderment and vertigo" (Hartman, *op. cit.*, p. 31). The esoteric tendencies complicate the interpretation of Mexican artistic remains (Joyce, *Mexican Archaeology*, p. 226).

Coupled with this characteristic of simplicity is the fact that the number of Greek symbols in common use was not very large. In Greek art we do not find that the symbols are "as many as the atoms of the Universe," as in Buddhist art (Anesaki, *Buddhist Art and Its Relation to Buddhist Ideals*, p. 35), nor yet do we find it necessary in Greek art to have classified lists of beings and their emblems as one must for Christian art, where not only members of the earthly hierarchy must be identified, but also various orders of supernatural beings, such as archangels, cherubim, seraphim, etc. (cf. Clement, *Handbook of Christian Symbols*, p. 14 f.).

It is a third characteristic of Greek symbols that they are always subordinate and do not exist for their own sake, but are merely explicative or explanatory of the main idea which is being presented. Ferrero discusses a group of symbols which he calls mystical, in which "the symbol often ends by replacing entirely the thing which it ought to represent, it absorbs the reality and acquires an exaggerated importance" (Ferrero, *Les Lois Psychologiques du Symbolisme*, p. 93). This description does not apply to Greek art where, for example, the thunderbolt never assumes a personality of its own, superseding the figure of Zeus, nor do aegis and spear assume that importance which belongs to Athena. There is no parallel in Greek art to the position of intrinsic importance assigned to the cross in Christian art, or to the serpent in Maya art (Spinden, *Civilizations of Mexico*, p. 84). Furthermore, isolated symbols do not appear as decorative motives in Greek art, except in the case of magic symbols like the apotropaic eye. A contrast with this may be observed in Japanese art where certain symbols do appear alone

as a decorative scheme; for example, the fan which is the emblem of command, the keys of the "go-down," specifying wealth, the crow as a sign of filial devotion, and so forth. (For extended lists of such symbols compare Allen, *Japanese Art Motives* and Otto, *Mythological Japan*.)

The same taste which prompted the Greeks to make their symbols few and simple, and to subordinate symbols to the main idea, led them to keep these symbols congruous. There are no "mixed metaphors" in Greek symbolism. Contrast with this the confusion on a Babylonian seal cylinder where in the same scene the sun is represented as an anthropomorphic being and as the gate of sunrise (Jastrow, *Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 423). Nor did Greek art indulge in the riotous confusion of symbols which forms such a characteristic feature of Hindu art (cf. the bronze statue of Siva Nataraja, Smith, *History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, pp. 250 f.).

It is another striking difference in the application of symbolism that Greek symbols nearly always conform to some sort of aesthetic canon. There is little suggestion of the absurd, the grotesque, or the horrible in Greek symbolism.[1] Contrast with this the unpleasant beast-human combinations of Egyptian and Babylonian art, or the fantastic forms of Maya deities which almost seem the wild fancies of an opium dream. But, as in other instances, the most decided contrast to Greek art in this respect is Hindu art. Smith voices the conservative sentiment of most observers when he comments that Hindu art has "little regard to aesthetic considerations, no form is regarded as too monstrous for plastic representation. The result too often is merely grotesque and absurd, but occasionally is horrible. Additional limbs and heads are put on, whether or not they disturb the balance of the composition or excite a feeling of disgust" (Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 182). Della Seta says that in Greek art considerations of form were a vital consideration because the art was decorative in type (Della Seta, *Religion and Art*, p. 212). We may sum up this difference by saying that Greek symbolism was that of the artist, and therefore his symbols had to

[1] Such instances as the "horse-headed" Demeter, known through literary references, are very rare in Greek art.

conform to aesthetic considerations, while the symbolism of these other countries was not primarily that of the artist, but of the religionist. In my opinion, this is the most important and characteristic feature of Greek symbolism.

With these differences noted between Greek symbolism and that of other countries, let us finally make inquiry into the reasons for such differences.

The first reason is the vital one of the purpose which art served in each country. In Egypt art served a protective purpose; its chief aim was the benefit of the dead. In Babylonia and Assyria the chief purpose of art was the glorification of the ruling dynasty (Della Seta, *op. cit.*, pp. 140 f.). The reliefs were for the most part realistic scenes of war and hunting; and symbols were used to convey the necessary setting of forest or sea. Early Christian symbolism was didactic in its purpose: Jenner says, "Beauty was not so much its object as instruction and reminding" (Jenner, *Christian Symbolism*, Introduction, p. xvii). Similarly, the main purpose of Hindu art was "to make the central idea of Hindu religion and philosophy intelligible" (Havell, *Ideals of Indian Art*, Introduction, p. xviii). Smith agrees that "the main object of the artist was to illustrate his Bible" (Smith, *History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, p. 78). The same author's comment in another passage is even more illuminating, "Art for its own sake did not, and does not now, interest the Hindu" (Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 8). The purpose of Greek art was μίμησις τῶν καλῶν, or, as Della Seta well expresses it, "The constant aim of Greek art was ideal perfection of form. A decorative form of art that would have its subjects valued for the appearance they assumed must give the greatest weight to considerations of form, for only by perfection of form could the expressiveness of the scene be increased" (Della Seta, *Religion and Art*, p. 212). The purpose of Greek art, therefore, was neither magical nor dynastic, neither didactic nor esoteric; it was aesthetic. The artist made a statue or coin with the twofold aim of satisfying his own instinct to create something beautiful and of giving to his patrons the pleasure of gazing upon something beautiful. Art, whose purpose is magical, didactic or esoteric, must call upon symbolism very extensively since many of the ideas engendered

by such purposes are "in the fulness of their own nature not expressible at all" (Pater, *Greek Studies*, p. 300). But an art whose purpose is μίμησις τῶν καλῶν excludes symbolism except in so far as realistic technique is deficient.

The second important reason for differences in symbolism lies in the attitude of the Greeks toward religion and philosophy. There never existed in the Greek religion that objection to the anthropomorphic representation of deity which existed in various other nations, notably among the Babylonians and Assyrians, the Jews, the early Christians, and during the early stages of Buddhism. Such objections to anthropomorphism forced artists to suggest the deities under various symbols, more or less appropriate to their character and functions; or else, as among the Jews, it entirely prevented the creation of art. Nor was there, among the Greeks, an overwhelming interest in the protective aspect of deity as in Egyptian religion; nor in the spiritual or moral nature of the deity as in Hebrew or Christian religion; nor yet in the philosophical or metaphysical aspect of deity as was the case among the Hindus. The chief religious interest of the Greeks was in the human or physical aspect of deity. From the viewpoint of religion, therefore, the Greek did not need to adopt symbolism for the expression of his ideas.[1]

The last reason for the differences in symbols lies in the attitude of the Greeks toward the physical world. The Greek had a very real love for and sympathy with the physical world and material existence. He did not hold the pessimistic doctrine of the Hindu that life is present pain and that the chief necessity was to annihilate the love of life. He did not strive "to subdue the flesh, to repress the passion for enjoyment, to trample upon one's own existence" (Della Seta, *Religion and Art*, pp. 295–96). On the contrary, the Greek rejoiced keenly in the pleasures which his senses afforded to

[1] Cf. Della Seta, *Religion and Art*, p. 303, "Greek art, the art of a nation which produced the greatest of philosophies, had never attempted to clothe philosophic conceptions in artistic form. On the contrary one of its best features, the one which enabled it to preserve eternal youth, was its unwillingness to philosophize with forms."

Della Seta, *op. cit.*, p. 142, "Greek art frees itself from the oppression of religious bonds and while taking its figure subjects from religion and myth, made from them pure ideals of material and moral beauty."

him and revelled deeply in the physical beauties of the world around him. As a result of this sensitive appreciation, he expressed his own ideas of beauty and aesthetics in terms of physical objects from the real world. One might almost say that he did his thinking through the medium of material and concrete objects. For example, when the Greek thought such an idea as Victory, he did not retain that idea as an abstract concept but immediately translated it into terms of the physical world wherein lay his chief interest: he had the rare gift of concrete visualization. Another important feature of this relation to the physical world was the Greek conception of man's place in the Universe. Many of the Chinese ideas and symbols are comprehensible only from their viewpoint of the "inferior position of man to the powers of Heaven and Earth" (Ferguson, *Outlines of Chinese Art*, p. 197); the Jewish view is the same, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" To the Greek, however, man was the equal of any being in the Universe; his gods were but larger men, and he had no visions of celestial beauty like those of a Fra Angelico. Thus the chief object of interest to the Greek was the human body and for his loving depiction of this form of beauty he needed no symbols.[1]

From our review of the artistic practice of various lands it appears that a recourse to symbolism is an indication of the artist's sense of the inadequacy of his art to picture fully his ideas and intentions. This inadequacy may be due merely to the artist's own lack of skill (in that he does not know how to picture something which is perfectly susceptible of being so pictured or represented); or it may be due to the artist's desire to express something incapable of direct pictorial representation. In Greek art we have found very few instances belonging to this second category. The clearest examples occurred (1) on coins, where they were due to the attempt to eliminate or to subordinate written legends (such as the name of the town minting the coin, the value of the coin), and (2) in the attempt to express abstractions in visual form. A recourse to symbolism because of the artist's lack of skill is naturally frequent

[1] Rodin, *Art*, p. 57, "Among no other people has the beauty of the human body excited a more sensuous tenderness."

in the earlier periods of Greek art. Thus, as long as there were no adequate means for individualizing persons, attributive symbols were inevitable; before the mastery of the means for showing facial expression properly, a symbolic language of gesture was necessary (e.g., Boston Counterpart). But as the growing technical proficiency eliminated these difficulties, the attendant symbolism tended to disappear *pari passu*. From our study there emerges this very important and very significant thesis, viz., that *the Greek artistic mind (to a degree known to no other nation) had the power of concrete visualisation and of self-expression in physically real terms capable of direct pictorial representation*. The Greek mind thought in terms of *what actually was* in order to suggest vividly and immediately *what actually might be*. This is one of the chief reasons why Greek art does not feel exotic nor become antiquated. It constitutes one of its chief claims to be a salutary influence and a great teacher for artists today.

Wherever the ultimate intention lies beyond the physically concrete and real (as so often happens when art is in the service of religion) the artist must help himself out with symbols. There is no more extraordinary comment upon the character of Greek religion than the apparent adequacy of Greek art to serve the demands of Greek religion without having to abandon any of its own concreteness, without having to take refuge in symbolic suggestion, nor is there any more illuminating comment on Indian art than its subordinance to symbolism in the interest of Indian religious ideas.

It may be that the greatest art is symbolic: such a conclusion might flow from one's definition of artistic greatness, and with such a thesis we here have no concern. But it would appear to follow from our discussion that part of the greatness of Greek art lies in its *avoidance* of symbolism and that Greek art is the great example of non-symbolic art.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.G.—Furtwängler, A., *Antike Gemmen.*
A.J.A.—American Journal of Archaeology.
Ann. d. Inst.—Annali dell' Instituto di Correspondenza Archaeologica.
Ant. Denk.—Antike Denkmäler.
Arch. Anz.—Archaeologischer Anzeiger.
Art and Arch.—Art and Archaeology.
Ath. Mitt.—Athenische Mittheilungen.
A.Z.—Archaeologische Zeitung.
B.B.—Brunn, H., and Arndt, P., *Denkmäler griechischer und römischer Skulptur.*
B.C.H.— Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique.
Bull. d. Inst.— Bulletin dell' Instituto.
C.R.— Comptes-Rendus de la Commission Imperiale Archéologique, Atlas.
Ephem. Arch.—Ephemeris Archaeologike.
F.R.—Furtwängler, A., and Reichold, K., *Griechische Vasenmalerei.*
H.N.—Head, B. V., *Historia Numorum.*
Jhb.—Jahrbuch des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts.
J.H.S.—Journal of Hellenic Studies.
Memorie—Memorie de l'Institut de Rome.
Mon. Ant. Linc.—Monumenti Antichi della Reale Accademia dei Lincei.
Mon. d. Inst.—Monumenti Inediti dell' Instituto.
Mon. Piot—Monuments et Mémoires: Fondation Eugene Piot.
Rev. Arch.—Revue Archéologique.
Rhein. Mus.—Rheinisches Museum.
Röm. Mitt.—Römische Mittheilungen.

VITA

I, Janet Malcolm Macdonald, was born in Hubbard, Iowa, March 6, 1891, daughter of W. T. Macdonald, D.D., and Margaret Janet Macdonald. I was prepared for college during the years 1904 to 1907 by the Morningside Academy, Sioux City, Iowa. From 1907 to 1910 I was a student at Morningside College, Sioux City, Iowa, from which I was graduated in 1910 with the degree of A.B. During 1911–12 I was assistant principal in the high school at Aurelia, Iowa. From 1912 to 1913 I was graduate scholar in classics at the University of Illinois, from which I received the degree of A.M. in 1913; during this year, the greater part of my work was done with Professor A. S. Pease and Professor W. A. Oldfather, to whose scholarship and inspiration I am deeply indebted. During the years 1913–15 I was instructor in Latin in Morningside College, Sioux City, Iowa. From 1915 to 1917 I was graduate scholar in archaeology at Bryn Mawr College, and 1917–18 fellow in archaeology at the same institution.

In 1917 I was awarded upon competitive examination the Fellowship of the School, in the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. My sincere thanks are due to Professor Rhys Carpenter for his kindly suggestions and generous assistance during the preparation for these examinations.

I acknowledge with pleasure my indebtedness to my various instructors, particularly to Professor Arthur Leslie Wheeler, Professor George Amos Barton, and Dr. Mary Hamilton Swindler.

I wish to express my thanks to Professor Rhys Carpenter for his suggestion of the subject, and for his interest and inspiration in the development of the thesis; and to Professor Joseph Clark Hoppin for his unfailing generosity of time and for his criticism and supervision of the dissertation during Professor Carpenter's absence in military service. I desire also to thank Dr. Mary Hamilton Swindler for many valuable suggestions; and Dr. Eleanor Ferguson Rambo for helpful criticism.

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